GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:458
ANSWERED ON:24.04.2002
BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION
PRAKASH V. PATIL;SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether negotiations on protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) have been blocked by the USA;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the details of the talks held in Geneva at the fifth review conference of the State parties to the BTWC;

(d) whether India has expressed reservations concerning the decision of United States to oppose seven years of sustained efforts to cobble a multilateral protocol with a view to strengthen the BTWC;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether this has led to the collapse of the talks among 144 countries; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH)

(a) to (g) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN PARTS (A) TO (G) OF THE REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 458 ANSWER ON 24.04.2002

On 25th July 2001, during the last scheduled meeting of the Ad hoc Group set up in 1994 to negotiate a Verification Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the US stated that, after an internal review, it had come to the conclusion that the mechanisms envisioned for the Protocol would not achieve their objectives, that no modification of them would allow them to achieve their objectives, and that trying to do more would simply raise the risk to legitimate United States activities. Though the US also said that it intended to explore other ideas and alternative approaches in the coming months, this announcement implied an end to the work of the Ad hoc Group.

The Review Conference attended by 144 States Parties of the BTWC, held in November-December 2001 in Geneva, was unable to resolve the issue and was adjourned till November 2002 when it would reconvene to resume its work.

India supports efforts aimed at strengthening the BTWC.India alongwith the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), has regretted the rejection of the draft Protocol. NAM has also emphasised the continued validity of the mandate given to the Ad hoc Group, and underlined that the BTWC needs to be strengthened through a non-discriminatory legally-binding instrument to be negotiated multilaterally within the framework of the Convention.